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# REPORT

OF THE

*New York (State) Legislature Assembly*

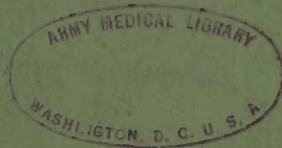
## COMMITTEE

ON THE

### BILL APPOINTING COMMISSIONERS TO LOCATE

A

### SECOND STATE LUNATIC ASYLUM.



Transmitted to the Legislature March 10, 1855.

ALBANY:

C. VAN BENTHUYSEN, PRINTER TO THE LEGISLATURE.

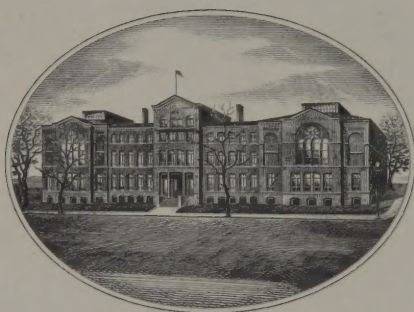
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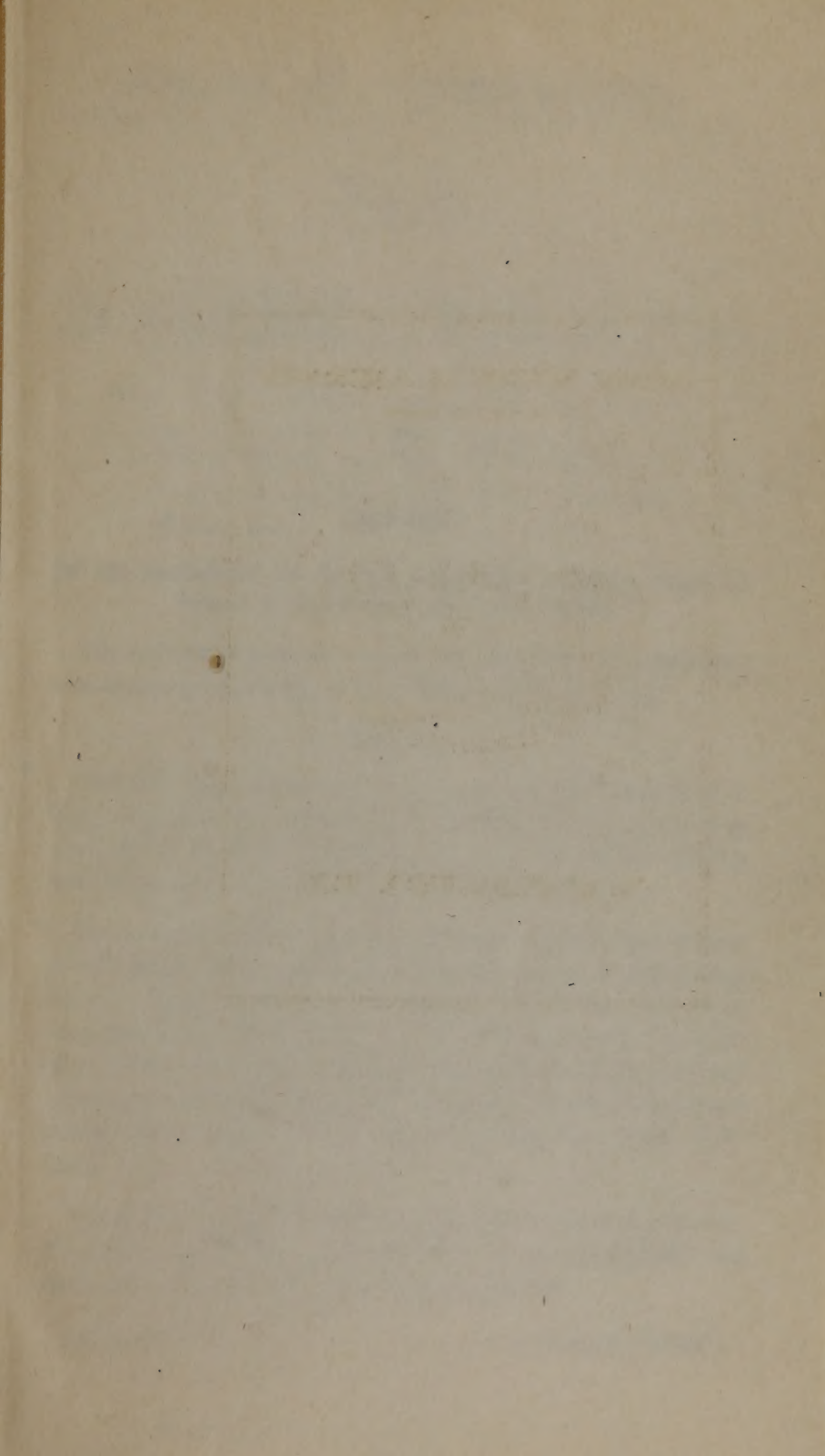
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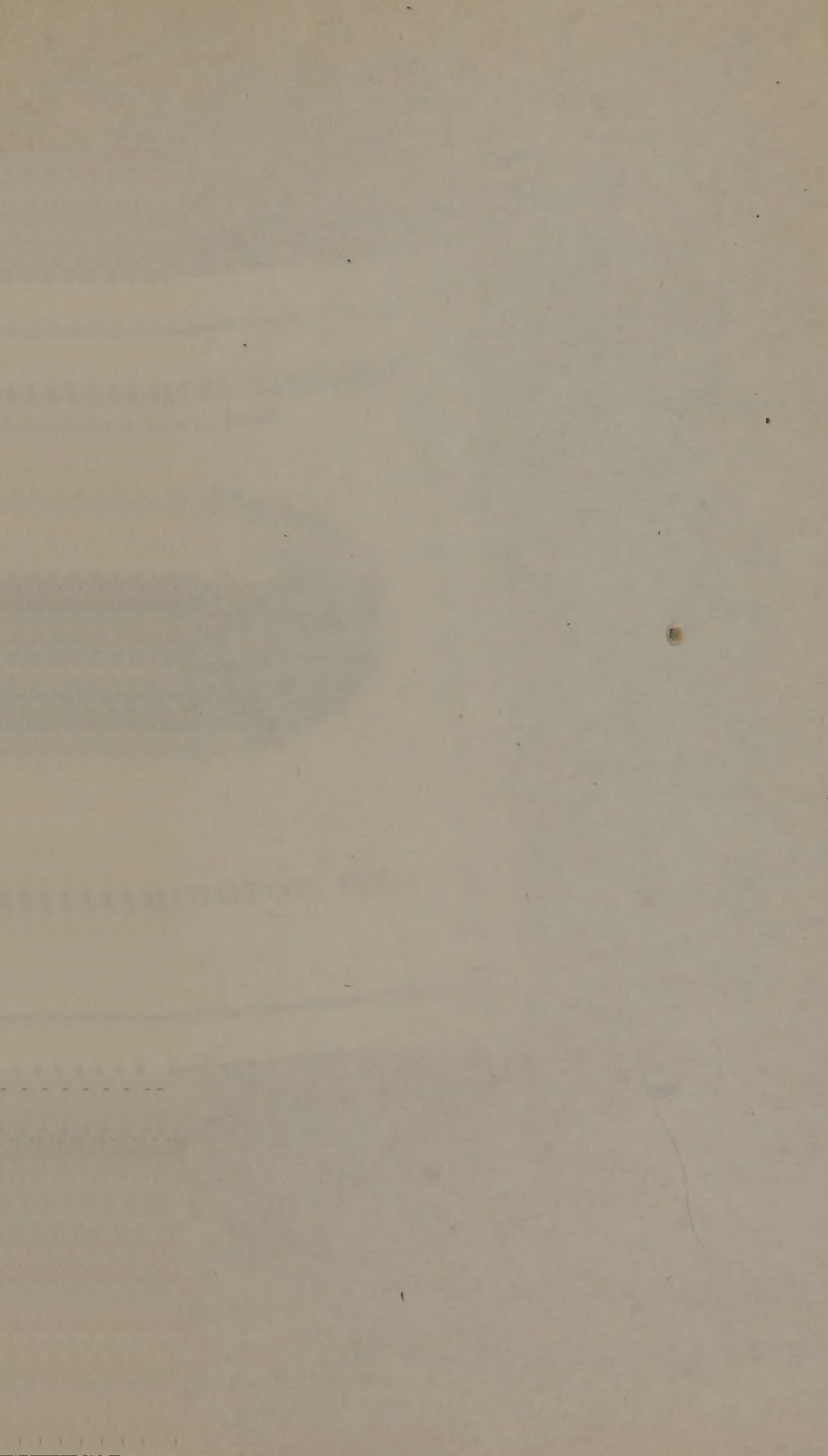
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# State of New-York.

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No. 91.

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IN ASSEMBLY, MAR. 10. 1855.

*New York (State) Legislature, Assembly.*

*Committee on the bill appointing  
commissioners to locate a second lunatic  
asylum.*

## REPORT.

### Of the committee on the bill appointing commissioners to locate a second State Lunatic Asylum.

The committee to which was referred the Senate bill appointing  
commissioners to locate a second State Lunatic Asylum,

#### REPORT:

That they have endeavored to give the subject committed to  
them that attention to which it is entitled, alike by its bearing  
upon the interests of an afflicted portion of our fellow citizens,  
and by the earnest recommendations of the Governor.

The committee do not deem it necessary to urge the importance  
of this subject upon the Legislature by any array of argument in  
favor of proper provision for the insane; nor do they seek to se-  
cure approval of their views by attempting to portray the mani-  
fold horrors of a "mind diseased," when both the intellectual and  
moral nature of its victim becomes distorted, leaving him a mere  
wreck at the mercy of his own wild impulses and fearful delu-  
sions.

The day has passed when it was necessary to present such con-  
siderations before the representatives of an enlightened and  
christian people to enlist their sympathy and aid.

The divine injunction to "comfort the feeble minded," is cheerfully obeyed, and the oil of healing is freely poured over the wounds which the corroding iron wears both in the flesh and soul of the suffering maniac.

The Lunatic Asylum, a creation of christian civilization, fostered by humane legislation and sound political economy, presents to the stricken ones a refuge in which many find a remedy and all alleviation.

New-York may justly boast an honorable rank among those States which were first to recognise the claim of the insane upon public sympathy and aid. Previous to the war of independence, the Colonial Legislature contributed to the erection of a hospital in New-York city, in which the insane and sick were received indiscriminately; and early in the present century the Senate and Assembly voted liberal sums for the construction and endowment of a special asylum for lunatics in the same city.

To this institution the insane of the State were generally sent until such establishments were multiplied.

In 1843 the asylum at Utica opened, having accommodations for 250 patients. In 1849 its capacity was increased by additional buldings to 550, but is now reduced to 450 by using basements for warm air chambers.

This number has been exceeded for years, and with each successive year increased demands are made upon this admirable institution.

The time however has arrived when this extensive charity is no longer able to receive all those who seek its restoring or consoling aid. During the past three years its officers have felt compelled to discharge ninety-eight patients who were still proper subjects for hospital treatment, in order to receive more recent and urgent cases, and also to refuse admission to two hundred and forty-three (243) other applicants.

During the past year 51 such removals have occurred, and 108 denials of admission have been recorded.



Thus compelled to acknowledge that the State asylum at Utica presents insufficient accomodation for those it is intended to receive, we seek elsewhere places of retreat for those who are turned from its now crowded halls.

In New-York city we find the extensive establishment on Blackwells Island already filled to overflowing, and enclosing in its walls over 500 of the city poor and lunatic emigrants. Weekly complaints of insufficient space, and weekly remonstrances against further increase of inmates warn us that no relief is to be found here.

A new and excellent institution now rising at Flatbush, will scarcely meet the wants of Kings county, at whose expense it is erected, while Queens and Suffolk counties would gladly send hither their patients if they could be received.

The asylum at Bloomingdale, a branch of the New-York hospital, has been enlarged during the past year, and though heretofore filled by self supporting patients, is now able to receive a limited number of recent cases from neighboring counties.

The number of patients in these several institutions is

Utica Asylum, .....	450
New-York City Asylum, Blackwells Island, .....	557
Kings County Asylum, at Flatbush, .....	220
Bloomingdale Asylum, .....	130
	<hr/>
	1,357
	<hr/>

By the census of 1850 this State is reported as containing over 2,500 insane persons; about one-half of all these must be retained at home by their friends, confined in county poor houses or roaming at large, all more or less exposed to neglect themselves while forming an element of danger to society.

The committee have not been able to ascertain the condition of these unfortunates in the several counties throughout the State, but from facts within our knowledge, we can assert that many of them are this day in a situation little if at all better than that

described in the memorial which induced the Legislature to erect the asylum at Utica.

In the cellars of some of our county poor houses, bound to floors or bunks by chains which are rarely or never loosened, may still be found men and women whose limbs are fettered because their brains are diseased.

Their conduct being the reflex of their delirious desires and impulses, is at times violent, and to those whose notions of the management of the insane have been acquired amid such influences, the frenzy of these wretched beings is often alarming.

But it was for such as these that the State established the asylum at Utica, and many whose condition was once as sad as theirs, are now found among the most orderly, contented and industrious of that great household.

In some instances the mental derangement of these county patients is paroxysmal, presenting intervals of reason, during which they are capable of appreciating and participating in those rational diversions which enliven the comparatively happy life of the asylum inmate.

It is probably not a bold statement to make that on all classes of patients now confined in county houses, the mild restraints, invigorating occupations, generous diet, and other remedial influences of a well conducted asylum would effect a marked change.

County poor houses can claim no higher merit as regards the insane than that of custodial establishments. They cannot and do not possess the requisite skill, attendance and appliances for the treatment of such patients. Their influence on the disease is not curative but confirmatory. They are receptacles not hospitals.

Your committee are persuaded, as they believe the Legislature and the public to be, that nowhere save in a well appointed hospital can the insane receive such medical and moral care as their peculiar disease requires.



The records of our own State hospital present gratifying evidence that it will compare favorably in its operations with its sister institutions in other commonwealths. The extent of its beneficence is this exhibited by his excellency, the Governor in his late message.

“From the opening of the asylum in 1843, to the present date, 4,313 have been admitted to its benefits, of whom 1,789 have been discharged as recovered.”

“In numerous other cases, where full restoration was clearly beyond the province of human skill, the sufferings of the unfortunate patient have been greatly mitigated, and the anguish and anxiety of their friends materially relieved. Thus, through its whole existence has the institution been a dispenser of blessings, great beyond the power of estimation. Its results have not only justified the christian philanthropy that suggested, and the beneficent provision which carried into practical operation so noble a charity, but have conferred honor upon our commonwealth far greater than could have been won through the extension of her commerce, the increase of her wealth, or the reduction to her purposes of the material forces of nature.”

The statistics of other noble charities of a similar character in this and other States of the confederacy, all illustrate the wisdom and philanthropy of the Legislatures which gave them being.

But above and beyond all those more appreciable results which may be set forth in tabular statements, there is an unwritten history of well doing which statistics cannot exhibit. The difficulty of estimating these influences is well described in the following remarks of a distinguished guardian of the insane, Dr. Ray, Supt. of “the Butler hospital” at Providence, Rhode Island.

“I need hardly say to your board that a general summary of results like this, conveys but a very inadequate idea to most persons of the amount of good accomplished in a single year by a hospital for the insane. This is too much connected with personal feelings, and too little with material interests to be very accurately indicated

by any statistical expression of results. To how few can the simple statement that so many have recovered, give any idea of the peculiar joy experienced by those who have seen the cloud of disease lifted up from their spirits and the undimmed light of reason shining serenely out from their mental horizon. The hours of mental torture that have been soothed, the crushing burden of distrust and apprehension that has been lightened, the joy of those, the husband, father, child, who welcome the return of the loved one as from the grave, the relief of that desperate agony which day after day has been aggravated by the appalling sights and sounds that often crowd upon the shattered mind, the restoration to the domestic circle of peace, order and quiet, that has followed the withdrawal of some uneasy spirit whom none of the arts of kindness could please or soften, these are benefits that cannot be estimated by figures, though not among the least conferred upon a community by establishments like ours ; neither are words more adequate to the purpose, because these benefits lie too far beyond the range of ordinary experience to be conceived of by any who have not personally seen and felt them."

In considering the influences bearing upon the subject before them, the committee deem it necessary not only to remark the present inadequacy of the asylum at Utica to meet the wants of our citizens, but also to anticipate the probable increase of demands upon it from an increasing population.

With the diffusion of accurate information regarding hospitals for the insane has arisen increased confidence in their management and a disposition to secure the speedy restoration which early removal thereto so generally ensures.

Motives of philanthropy as well as of individual and State economy require that this confidence and this disposition be encouraged. Lives are thereby saved ; our fellow men are restored to health and usefulness ; families and counties are relieved of heavy taxes for the support of incurables, and private and public wealth is augmented by the return to profitable employment of those whom early treatment under favorable auspices has alone saved from becoming burdens on their fellow creatures.

In view of the above considerations your committee believe it expedient and necessary that further hospital accommodations be provided for the insane of the State, and they thus recapitulate the reasons for their opinion, viz;

1. The acknowledged necessity and efficiency of hospital treatment.
2. The present totally inadequate accommodation.
3. The prospective certainty of increased numbers of insane persons as population increases, and the correlative necessity for space for their safety and treatment.

A second question meets us at this point, viz:

How can the needed accommodation be best supplied?

This question is scarcely inferior in importance to the first, and deserves a careful investigation of the various systems adopted in other States, the distribution of the insane in our own commonwealth, and regard to the means of access to existing or proposed institutions.

Two methods are suggested by the Governor for fulfilling the duty of the State toward the insane, viz:

1. By enlarging the asylum at Utica.
2. By erecting a similar institution in some other part of the State.

An election between these two modes is to be determined on the broad basis of justice to the insane of the whole State rather than upon the narrow one of the cost of providing a certain number of apartments regardless of influences which seriously affect the welfare of their future occupants.

This subject has been very fully studied by those whose peculiar province it is, as medical superintendents of insane hospitals, to consider all matters bearing upon the interests of their wards, and their opinions are deserving of respectful attention.



One of these gentlemen, Dr. Edward Jarvis, of Dorchester, Mass., in a valuable essay, read before the American Statistical Association, and entitled "the influence of distance from and proximity to an insane hospital, on its use by any people," has presented conclusions which appear to us irresistible as a rule of government.

The views of Dr. Jarvis commend themselves to an unprejudiced judgment, and we draw copiously on his paper in offering reasons for our own recommendations.

In devising relief for those whose misfortunes we propose to mitigate or remove, it must be remembered that the causes of insanity are equally operative throughout every part of our territory, and that no exemption from its dire visitation can be claimed by reason of any accident of residence, occupation or condition of life.

It is there for the insane of the whole State that such institutions must be provided, so located and administered as to secure impartial justice to all.

But as Dr. Jarvis truly says "an insane hospital is, and must be to a certain extent a local institution. People will avail themselves of its privileges in some proportion to their nearness to it. No liberality of admission, no excellence of its management, no power of reputation can entirely overcome the obstacle of distance, expense, and of the difficulties of transporting lunatics, or the objections of friends to sending their insane patients far from home, and out of reach of ready communication."

This proposition Dr. Jarvis establishes as a principle by abundant statistics drawn from almost every insane hospital in the United States, showing that State institutions "are practically much more local in their usefulness than they are intended or supposed to be." It is shown that in every instance the counties in the immediate neighborhood of the institution maintained a much larger number of patients in proportion to the population than more distant districts.

The following table from the same authority will exhibit this disproportion :

*Number of people in various districts to each patient sent to the lunatic hospital.*

ASYLUM.	Period during which patients were sent.	Counties or districts at various distances from the asylum.				
		County of asylum.	Next dist.	3d dist.	4th dist.	5th dist.
Augusta, Me.,....	1840 to 1849.	263	518	856	.....	
Concord, N. H.,...	1842 to 1849.	248	412	900	.....	
Worcester, Mass.,.	1833 to 1849.	116	217	284	381	
Providence, R. I.,.	1848.	406	5,710	.....	.....	
Hartford, Conn.,..	1844 to 1848.	424	705	1,418	...	
Utica, N. Y., .....	1843 to 1849.	361	680	812	1,523	
Trenton, N. J.,....	1848.	1,956	3,077	6,781	....	
Baltimore, Md.,...	1843 to 1849.	500	689	2,680	.....	
Stanton, Va., ....	1828 to 1849.	300	420	658	916	1,534
Columbus, Ohio,..	1839 to 1849.	582	994	1,093	1,168	
Lexington, Ken'y.,	1824 to 1842.	89	314	625	1,185	1,635
Nashville, Tenn., .	1844 to 1849.	349	1,374	3,257	4,529	

It is manifest from this table that the proportion of patients sent to either asylum out of any definite number of people diminishes constantly from the centre to the circumference; but this ratio is not equal in the different States, nor for the same increase of different distances in the same State. There are many circumstances that modify it and influence people in their use of hospitals for their lunatic freinds.

“Facilities of travel, navigable rivers, railroads, canals, public highways, public conveyances which render communication easy and cheap, and intercourse familiar, and virtually diminish distance from the hospital, increase the ratio of patients that are sent to it.”

Thus “twenty-six counties in New-York, situated along the Hudson river and the great lines of canals and railroads extending from Buffalo to the city of New-York, with a population of 1,111,385, sent 1,394 patients to the Utica hospital, or 1 in 790 of

their people, while 34 other counties, not on these great and easy lines of communication, and at about the same average distance, with 986,777 people, sent during the same years 854 patients, or 1 in 1,155 of their population."

"Ten counties along the line of the central railroad, within one hundred miles of Utica, and with a population of 468,269, sent 857 patients, or 1 in 546, while eleven other counties, the most distant and difficult of access, with 352,549 people, sent 156, or 1 in 2,259."

"Taking these facts (and similar ones in every instance named in the foregoing table) into view, we have indisputable proof of the effect of distance in diminishing the practical benefits of lunatic hospitals to the people of any district."

"In all these States these hospitals are as open and their advantages as freely granted to the patients from the most remote towns as to those in their very neighborhood. It is not hinted nor even suspected that the lunatics whose friends reside afar off, are not as kindly, as faithfully, and as successfully treated, and at as small a cost as those whose families are near enough to keep a watchful vigilance over their welfare."

"Yet the inevitable results of a natural and common mode of reasoning among men is apparent here as elsewhere, and the absence of familiarity with the operations of such institutions, acts prejudicially upon the insane and the public of remote districts."

"The idea of the hospital purposes, and its management is familiar to those who live in its vicinity. They know its means, its objects, and its administration. They know the character of its officers and attendants; they are frequently witnessing its operations and results in the many who are going to and returning from it, in improved or restored mental health; and when any one among their families or friends becomes deranged, the hospital occurs to them as a means of relief, and they look upon it as a resting place from their troubles."

"But this ready association of the hospital with lunacy, and this generous confidence in its management, diminish as we re-



cede from it. The people in remoter places know the general facts, but distance lends obscurity to the notion, and thus the character of the hospital and its administration do not stand before them as the thought of home and domestic arrangements, of which they can cheerfully and trustfully avail themselves in any emergency."

"The unwillingness to be far separated from their suffering friends, operates with many. This is indeed a mere feeling or sentiment, but it is converted into practical facts, and retains some at home who would otherwise be sent to and cured in a hospital, if it were nearer to them."

The injurious effects of removing insane persons over great distances, perhaps by uncomfortable or exposed means of conveyance, often induces, not only reluctance on the part of friends, but remonstrances from the best informed physicians. Not unfrequently is the patient in such precarious physical health, as to render imprudent a course which in uncomplicated mental disease would be most judicious, while in cases of great maniacal excitement, the very coercion necessary to carry out a humane intention, might peril life.

The late Dr. Brigham, in his fifth annual report of the Utica Asylum, says: "Several patients have died this year soon after admission, apparently from exhaustion following very high excitement, and the fatigue of a long journey without rest or food." He also adds: "Most of the patients brought to this Asylum have to journey a considerable distance, some several hundred miles, and if suffering from fever or inflammation, their condition is likely to become alarming soon after their arrival, and their homes are to remote for them to return. Thus we have in repeated instances, been obliged to receive patients that we supposed would live but a short time, and so advised their friends."

"The difficulties and expense of sending patients over long distances (remarks Dr. Jarvis,) or by private conveyances on unfrequented and indirect roads, are perhaps the most effectual obstacles in the way, and more than any other diminish the number

of patients, with the increase of miles that separate them from the hospital."

"We think we have here presented facts enough to establish it as a general principle, that the advantages of any public lunatic asylum, however freely and equally they may be offered to all the people of any state, are yet, to a certain degree, local in their operation, and are enjoyed by people and communities to an extent proportionate to their nearness to, or distance from it."

"Whenever and wherever the same causes exist, the effects must be produced, and any hospital that may hereafter be established must be subject to the same law." Therefore, while no objection may be made to great lunatic establishments near large cities and intended for their people, as at Blackwell's Island, near New-York city, it is morally impossible that any institution of this nature, however extensive, should be able to diffuse its benefits equally to any large rural population, especially if spread over a considerable extent of territory."

In the paper from which we have so copiously drawn, we find the following allusion to an early design for establishing at Utica an institution which would have rivalled in magnitude, those of London and Paris. We may well congratulate ourselves that this design was not carried into effect.

"It was first proposed to build at Utica, in the centre of New-York, one grand lunatic establishment, whose magnificence should correspond with the greatness of the Empire State," and which should offer equal advantages to, and receive one thousand patients from all parts of the State. There was a seeming grandeur in this plan, but it was a magnificent mistake. It might provide for and receive all the lunatics of Oneida county, and nearly all those of Herkimer and Oswego, but not more than a fifth or a fourth of those of Rockland and Clinton. The same is and must be, the practical result of every large establishment for this purpose, and this fact ought to be considered by those who propose to create anew any great hospital, or to enlarge one already in operation."

There is another view in which the question of capacity may be regarded, that should not be unheeded here. There is a certain size of asylum which is most convenient for management, and most advantageous for patients. They should be sufficiently large to contain as many patients as are necessary for proper classification and management, and to give employment to all necessary officers and attendants.

The "Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane," consisting of medical men whose time and efforts are spent in advancing the welfare of the insane, unanimously concur in the opinion, that it is desirable that in no asylum should the number of patients exceed two hundred and fifty. Believing that the principal physician should personally acquaint himself with the character, disease, peculiarities and daily history of each individual in his charge; this association regard the above named limit as a judicious maximum, which the welfare of the institution and its inmates will not allow to be disregarded with safety.

"Whatever number is considered as best for the good of the patients, ought to determine the size of the hospital; and next, it must not be forgotten, that this institution is necessarily and practically local in its operation, and that instead of building up large establishments with the vain expectation of concentrating the lunatics in equal proportions from the people of all districts, both far and near, the only way to diffuse these benefits in any degree approaching to equality, is to divide the curative and custodial means for the insane; among the various districts of the State."

"The enlargement of any hospital already in existence, and thus inviting more patients to its wards, does not meet and remove the difficulty. The same causes continue to affect its population, and the same disparity of representation continues to the end."

The Utica Asylum accommodates 450 patients. Instead of building this single and great institution, the State had built four smaller ones, in the northern, southern, middle and western sections of its territory; the circles of fifty miles around each of



them, would have sent as large a proportion of their insane to the neighboring hospitals, as that around Utica. Instead of one highly favored centre and a broad margin, all around enjoying less than a third as much, there would have been four favored centres, and none so far off as to reap so small a share of the hospital benefits as the most distant counties now receive."

That the opinions expressed by the committee, are supported by reliable facts, will be abundantly proved by the following table of patients admitted into the asylum at Utica from the several counties of this State.

*Residence of the patients in the State Lunatic Asylum, 1843 to 1853.*

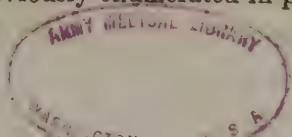
Counties.	Population in 1840.	Patients in Asylum	Pop. to 1 patient.
Oneida,.....	99,566	398	250
Counties within fifty miles of Asylum.			
Lewis,.....	24,564	32	
Herkimer,.....	38,244	121	
Fulton,.....	20,171	25	
Montgomery,.....	31,992	59	
Otsego,.....	48,638	109	
Madison,.....	43,072	139	
Chenango,.....	40,311	108	
Onondaga,.....	85,890	184	
Oswego,.....	62,198	82	
Cortland,.....	25,140	39	
Schoharie,.....	33,548	37	
	<hr/> 453,768 <hr/>	<hr/> 935 <hr/>	<hr/> 485 <hr/>
Counties within one hundred miles of Asylum.			
Jefferson,.....	68,153	120	
St. Lawrence,.....	68,617	61	
Franklin,.....	25,102	12	
Essex,.....	31,148	14	
Warren,.....	17,199	26	
Saratoga,.....	45,646	69	
Washington,.....	44,750	52	
Schenectady,.....	20,054	70	
Albany,.....	93,279	222	
Rensselaer,.....	73,363	153	
Greene,.....	33,126	58	
Delaware,.....	39,834	35	

Counties within one hundred miles of Asylum.	Population in 1840.	Patients in Asylum.	Pop. to 1 patient.
Broome,.....	30,660	50	
Tioga,.....	24,880	43	
Tompkins,.....	38,746	61	
Cayuga,.....	55,458	108	
Seneca,.....	25,441	35	1 patient
Wayne,.....	44,953	63	in
	<u>780,409</u>	<u>1,252</u>	<u>622</u> inhabitants.

## Counties remote from Asylum.

Allegany,.....	57,808	24	
Cattaraugus,.....	38,950	24	
Chautauque,.....	50,493	85	
Chemung,.....	28,821	34	
Columbia,.....	43,073	47	
Clinton,.....	40,047	15	
Dutchess,.....	58,992	52	
Erie,.....	100,993	75	
Genesee,.....	28,488	41	
Hamilton,.....	2,188	1	
Kings,.....	138,882	4	
Livingston,.....	40,875	58	
Monroe,.....	87,650	171	
New-York,.....	515,547	31	
Niagara,.....	42,276	45	
Ontario,.....	43,929	96	
Orange,.....	57,145	59	
Orleans,.....	28,501	36	
Putnam,.....	14,138	5	
Queens,.....	36,833	10	
Rockland,.....	16,962	2	
Richmond,.....	15,061	3	
Steuben,.....	63,771	69	
Suffolk,.....	36,922	19	
Sullivan,.....	25,088	22	
Ulster,.....	59,384	45	
Westchester,.....	58,263	7	
Wyoming,.....	31,981	44	1 patient
Yates,.....	20,590	37	in
	<u>1,763,651</u>	<u>1,161</u>	<u>1,520</u> inhabitants.

Thus the history of the operations of our State asylum concurs with that of the other institutions previously enumerated in proving two principles, viz :



1. "That the practical benefits of a lunatic asylum are very unequally diffused over any territory, that this inequality increases with the extent of that territory, the near districts enjoying the hospital advantages very much, and the distant districts comparatively little "

2. That facility and difficulty, cheapness and expensiveness of travel also effect this inequality, more patients being sent from those districts that are connected with the hospital by means of easy and cheap communication than from those which are not so favored.

These principles the committee believe to be well established, and therefore not to be disregarded by those who propose to provide further accommodations for our insane population.

In the opinion of the committee they forbid the extension of the present building at Utica, which, furthermore, is already larger than those persons whose judgment is most to be respected could desire.

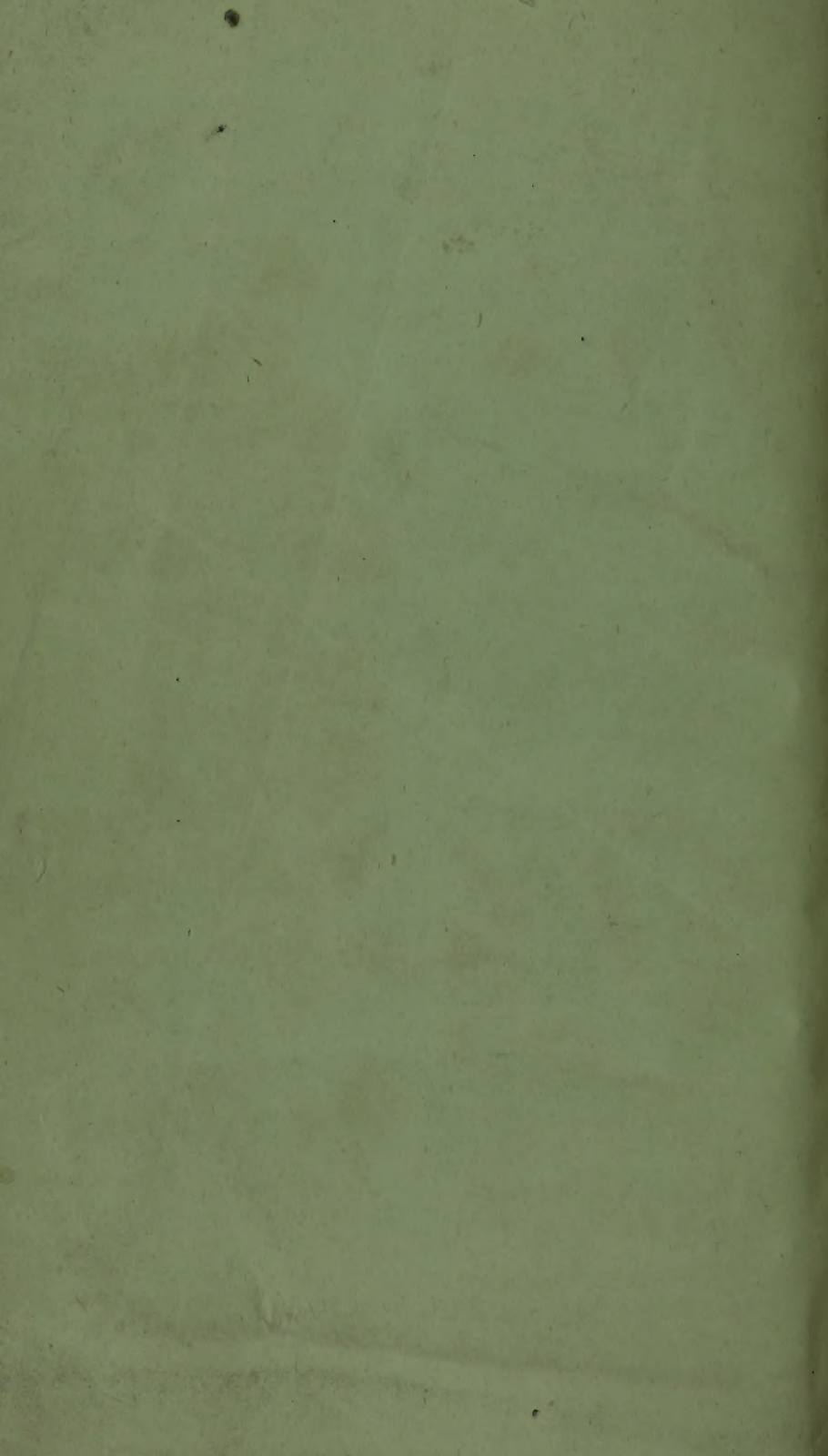
Believing that a necessity exists for providing further accommodations for the insane of our State, this committee to which the Senate bill providing for the appointment of commissioners to select a site for a second lunatic asylum building, was referred, report the same to the House, and as amended, recommend its passage.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

CHARLES C. LEIGH.







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